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Steve★Rogers CAPTAIN AMERICA

NICK SPENCER • JESÚS SAIZ

HAIL HYDRA!

THE SECRET HISTORY OF STEVE ROGERS REVEALED!

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VARIANT EDITION

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Super-Soldier. Avenger. Agent of Hydra. He is...

Steve Rogers CAPTAIN AMERICA

While fighting his way through S.H.I.E.L.D.'s reality-bending small-town super prison Pleasant Hill, an aged and depowered Steve Rogers was returned to fighting form by a sentient Cosmic Cube named Kobik. It seemed that Steve was back to normal, until he was sent after Baron Zemo: a prominent Hydra member who escaped Pleasant Hill with Kobik's handler, Dr. Erik Selvig, in tow.

When Steve's backup, Jack Flag, interrupted his confrontation with Zemo, Steve pushed Jack out of the plane, turned to Selvig and said two words:

Hail Hydra.

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Captain America created by Joe Simon & Jack Kirby Special thanks to Mark Waid and Ron Garney! Hail Hydra!

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I HAVE WAITED SO LONG FOR THIS, CAPTAIN.

TO WATCH THESE STRUCTURES YOU PLEDGED YOUR ALLEGIANCE TO COLLAPSE AND BURN ALL AROUND YOU.

TO SEE THE RUIN OF THE OLD ORDER YOU DEFENDED, AND TO KNOW THAT THE CAUSE OF IT ALL--

--WAS THEIR OWN ARROGANCE.

TO BELIEVE THEY COULD WIELD THE INSTRUMENT OF GODS AND BEND IT TO THEIR CORRUPT ENDS.

A COSMIC CUBE--A THING OF UNLIMITED POWER, ABLE TO SHAPE REALITY WITH MERELY A THOUGHT.

THIS ONE MADE SENTIENT AND WALKING AMONGST YOU IN THE FORM OF A LITTLE GIRL.

YOU BEND ITS EAR, AND WHAT DO YOU ASK IT TO DO FOR YOU?

YOU ASK IT TO BUILD YOU A PRISON.

HOW MEAGER AND SMALL YOU ARE.

AND WHEN THIS PRISON FALLS, YOU DO WHAT YOU ALWAYS DO--FIGHT AND SQUABBLE. BLUSTER AND BRUISE.

IT IS ALL YOU KNOW.

BUT IN THIS CHAOS--THIS CHAOS OF YOUR OWN DESIGN--NOT ONE OF YOU THOUGHT TO ASK THE TRULY IMPORTANT QUESTIONS.

WHERE DID THIS CUBE COME FROM...

...AND WHO IS ITS RIGHTFUL OWNER?

YEARS AGO.

ROGERS?

OFF ME, YOU FOOL! THE CUBE IS MINE!

MINE!

STAY AWAY FROM IT, SKULL! I'M WARNING YOU! STAY BACK, OR--

WHAT HUBRIS.

TO BELIEVE YOU COULD STEAL THAT WHICH WAS *MINE.*

THAT YOU WOULD EVEN KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH SUCH AN HONOR.

THAT YOU WERE *WORTHY* OF ITS GREATNESS.

NO SURPRISE THEN, WHEN IT REJECTS YOU.

SEE THE COST OF YOUR RECKLESSNESS...

...SEE HOW IT *BURNS.*

BUT NOT ALL IS IN VAIN.

FROM THAT CARNAGE AND DESTRUCTION--

--SOMETHING *BEAUTIFUL* IS BORN...

...AND SOMETHING GRAND BEGINS.

NOT INTERESTED.

DOCTOR SELVIG, PLEASE--AT LEAST LET ME FINISH OUTLINING THE OFFER. I MEAN, I HAVEN'T EVEN PROMISED YOU A FLYING CAR YET--NOBODY TURNS ME DOWN ONCE I THROW IN ONE OF THOSE THINGS.

I'M FROM COPENHAGEN, I'D PREFER A BICYCLE. BUT MY ANSWER IS NO.

I'M HAPPY, OF COURSE, TO CONTINUE AS A CONSULTANT ON THE KOBIK INITIATIVE, HOWEVER--

BIG RELIEF. YOU ARE THE WORLD'S LEADING EXPERT ON COSMIC CUBES THAT DOESN'T DRESS LIKE A GIANT BANANA, AFTER ALL.

AND CAN I JUST SAY, THAT REALLY IS A GOOD THING, SINCE IT MEANS I'M NOT CRAVING BANANAS ALL THE TIME--APPARENTLY THERE IS SUCH A THING AS TOO MUCH POTASSIUM.

DIRECTOR HILL--YOU'RE ASKING ME TO JOIN YOUR AGENCY FULL-TIME. I AM A SCIENTIST. I WORK FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD. AND WHAT YOU PEOPLE AT S.H.I.E.L.D. DO--

I GET IT. ENHANCED INTERROGATION, MASS SURVEILLANCE, REGIME CHANGE--OUR BUSINESS CAN GET A LITTLE...ICKY. CERTAINLY NOT THE KINDA STUFF A GUY WHO BIKES TO WORK WANTS TO IMMERSE HIMSELF IN.

PRECISELY. BESIDES, DOCTOR FOWLER AND I WERE COLLEAGUES FOR YEARS--SHE IS MORE THAN CAPABLE OF RUNNING THIS PROJECT--

NOT ANYMORE, SHE ISN'T.

FOWLER'S DEAD, DOCTOR SELVIG.

I--DON'T UNDERSTAND... KAREN? HOW? WHAT HAPPENED?

THAT'S WHY WE NEED YOUR HELP SO BADLY--

--SHE HAPPENED.

MY GOD.

THIS IS-- THE ***CUBE FRAGMENTS?***

APPARENTLY SOMEONE FED THEM AFTER MIDNIGHT.

INCREDIBLE. IT'S THE NATURE OF COSMIC CUBES TO BECOME ***SENTIENT, SELF-AWARE*** BEINGS--

--BUT KOBIK WAS ***INCOMPLETE,*** JUST A HANDFUL OF FRAGMENTS KEPT ISOLATED FROM ONE ANOTHER. THIS SHOULDN'T BE POSSIBLE--

AND YET ***KAREN FOWLER*** AND A DOZEN OTHERS LOST THEIR LIVES WATCHING IT HAPPEN. THAT'S WHY WE NEED ***YOU,*** ERIK. I'M SURE YOU CAN SEE WHAT'S AT STAKE HERE.

WHAT'S AT--THE ***UNIVERSE*** IS AT STAKE! A VIOLENT BIRTH, MANIFESTING AS A ***CHILD...*** YOU COULD BE LOOKING AT A VERY DAMAGED, UNBALANCED BEING CAPABLE OF ALTERING ALL OF REALITY ON A WHIM--

SURE, BUT I'M GIVING IT THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT FOR NOW.

AND THIS ***STASIS?*** HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN LIKE THIS?

SINCE A FEW MINUTES AFTER SHE CAME ONLINE. SHE CRIED IN A CORNER, THEN FLOATED UP A FEW FEET, AND NOW HERE WE ARE.

FOR THE LAST SEVENTY-TWO HOURS, SHE HASN'T SO MUCH AS ***BLINKED.***

"IT'S LIKE SHE'S SOMEWHERE ELSE."

-SIGH-

I AM BORED.

PITY TO HEAR THAT, FATHER--

--BUT REPLACING THE ENTIRE KITCHEN STAFF WILL BE NO EASY TASK.

BAH. **YOU** TRY THIS SOUP AND TELL ME IT'S NOT **BLAND.** I WARNED THEM, CELERY IS A POOR BASE!

I'LL TAKE YOUR WORD FOR IT. YOU DO SEEM FRUSTRATED, THOUGH--

--I MEAN, MORE **FRUSTRATED** THAN USUAL.

HRR...

IT'S THESE **POWERS,** SIN! I THOUGHT POSSESSING THE BRAIN OF A GIFTED TELEPATH LIKE **CHARLES XAVIER** WOULD BE THE REALIZATION OF ALL I'VE DREAMED OF.

INSTEAD, IT'S A **NIGHTMARE!** IT'S ALL SO EASY--SO **ARTIFICIAL.** I YEARN FOR **CONQUEST,** BUT ONLY RECEIVE **SUBMISSION.** YES, I WANT THEM TO GROVEL AT MY FEET--

--BUT I WANT THEM TO **MEAN** IT!

THIS NEW HYDRA INITIATIVE YOU PROPOSED-- A MIND-CONTROLLED ARMY OF MEN IN GREEN-AND-YELLOW UNITARDS, BUILDING DOOMSDAY MACHINES AND INFILTRATING SPY AGENCIES? IT'S ALL SO... **UNINSPIRED!** WE'VE SEEN IT ALL BEFORE.

I WANT TO **BREAK** STEVE ROGERS-- I WANT TO **SHATTER** HIS VERY SOUL! UNLESS OUR GOAL IS TO **DROWN** HIM IN **NOSTALGIA,** THIS WILL SURELY FAIL.

WHAT I NEED IS A CHALLENGE... SOMETHING THAT CAN TRULY TRANSFORM THE WORLD AND MAKE IT MINE--SOMETHING CONVOLUTED...

-SNIFF- 'SCUSE ME... MISTER SKULL?

ACH!

DO YOU REMEMBER ME?

GUARD! WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?! WE HAVE AN INTRUDER! YOUR LEADER'S LIFE IS THREATENED--

BUT, SUPREME LEADER--IT'S--IT'S ONLY A CHILD...

WHY, YES, YES IT IS--

WHICH MEANS YOU MUST AIM LOWER.

HEY! THAT'S MEAN--

DON'T WORRY, FATHER-- I'LL HANDLE THIS.

I KNOW YOU-- BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE. HERE--

--I'LL FIX IT.

MY--MY FACE!

WHAT IS THIS MADNESS?!

STOP YELLING AT ME! I JUST-- I WAS SCARED AND I THOUGHT YOU WOULD BE NICE TO ME!

YOU CLEARLY DO NOT KNOW THE RED SKULL, CHILD--

NUH-UH! YOU USED TO BE NICE! YOU HELD ME WHEN I WAS LITTLE-- WE MADE UP A WHOLE WORLD TOGETHER. AND THERE WAS A BIG WAR, AND THAT CAPTAIN AMERICA GUY WAS THERE...

...AND THEN THERE WAS A FIGHT AND I GOT...

...BROKEN.

WAIT...A WORLD TOGETHER-- BROKEN IN A FIGHT--COULD IT REALLY BE?

THE COSMIC CUBE? MY CUBE?!

NOW ALL THESE WEIRD S.H.I.E.L.D. PEOPLE ARE TRYING TO BE NICE TO ME, EVEN THOUGH I HURT THEM--I DIDN'T MEAN TO! THEY WANNA BE MY FRIENDS.

CAN WE BE FRIENDS INSTEAD?

WHY... YES, CHILD. YES, OF COURSE WE CAN.

MY LOST TREASURE HAD BEEN RETURNED TO ME.

AND I INTENDED TO PUT IT TO GOOD USE.

I WOULD DESTROY S.H.I.E.L.D. FROM WITHIN. LET THEIR EAGERNESS TO EXPLOIT MY CUBE BE THEIR **DOWNFALL**.

HOLY @#$!

UNTIL A MISCREANT HACKER UNCOVERED THEIR LIES AND EXPOSED THEM TO THE WORLD.

IT MAY HAVE DELAYED MY PLAN, BUT IT WAS NOT WITHOUT REWARD.

I WATCHED AS THE DIRECTOR WAS HUMBLED--

--AND YOU WERE TORN APART FROM YOUR CLOSEST ALLY.

WHILE YOU WERE DISTRACTED BY YOUR PETTY DISAGREEMENTS AND THE HUNT FOR THE MAN WHO HAD MADE YOU LOOK SO FOOLISH--

--I SET ABOUT EARNING THE TRUST OF THE CUBE YOU CALLED KOBIK.

I COULD NOT YET CONTROL HER, OR FORCE HER TO SUBMIT TO MY DEMANDS--

THE WHISPERER

--BUT SHE COULD BE **GUIDED.**

"--SO IT WAS THAT HYDRA BECAME THE GREATEST TERRORIST ORGANIZATION THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN, WITH THE RED SKULL AS ITS RIGHTFUL LEADER. AND THEY ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER. THE END."

TELL IT AGAIN, TELL IT **AGAIN! PLEASE?!**

PERHAPS TOMORROW. FOR NOW, WE SHOULD DISCUSS WHAT YOUR NEW FRIENDS AT **S.H.I.E.L.D.** ARE DOING...

THEY'RE **DUMB.** EVERYBODY'S SAD BECAUSE THE WHISPERMAN TOLD ALL THEIR SECRETS.

NOW THEY DON'T HAVE ANYTHING FOR ME TO DO AND THEY'RE ALL IN BIG TROUBLE.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND--IF THEY WANT THE WORLD TO BE SAFE AND STUFF, WHY DON'T THEY JUST BECOME **HYDRA?**

THEN **YOU** COULD BE IN CHARGE AND EVERYONE WOULD BE HAPPY!

-SIGH- YOU'RE MORE RIGHT THAN YOU **KNOW,** LITTLE ONE. BUT FOR NOW, WE MUST WAIT--AND KEEP OUR SECRET. YOU **REMEMBER,** DON'T YOU?

UH-HUH. I DON'T TELL NOBODY ABOUT YOU OR HYDRA, UNTIL YOU'RE READY--THEN **BIG SURPRISE PARTY! WHEE!**

PRECISELY. YOU MUSTN'T RUIN THE SURPRISE. THEY DON'T SUSPECT ANYTHING, DO THEY?

NO WAY! NOBODY KNOWS WHAT ME AND DOCTOR SELVIG ARE DOING--

GOOD-- WAIT-- ***WHO?***

UH... NOTHIN'?

KOBIK-- ***WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!***

DON'T BE ***MAD!*** HE WAS FIGURING IT OUT--SO I MADE HIM LIKE ***US!*** HERE--

--I'LL SHOW YOU.

KOBIK? IS THAT YOU? I WASN'T EXPECTING--

--COMPANY.

OH. OH, MY--

SUPREME LEADER! IT-- IT IS AN HONOR!

WHAT-- WHAT IS THIS?

MY ENTIRE LIFE I HAVE SERVED YOUR CAUSE. I HAVE WORKED TIRELESSLY TO PROMOTE YOUR VISION. A MORE PERFECT WORLD-- THROUGH HYDRA!

THIS IS MADNESS--

OR SO I BELIEVED, UNTIL I LOOKED INSIDE HIS MIND--

AND SAW SOMETHING *INCREDIBLE.*

HIS MEMORIES--HIS *REAL* MEMORIES--OF A LIFE HE COULDN'T POSSIBLY HAVE LIVED.

A LIFE WITHIN THE HYDRA OF HER STORIES!

DID I DO GOOD?

INDEED YOU *DID,* GIRL. AND YOU CAN DO THIS...TO *ANYONE?*

UH-HUH. I THINK SO. I *LIKE* FIXING PEOPLE--MAKING THEM HYDRA MAKES THEM BETTER THAN EVER!

AND IN THAT MOMENT, I KNEW WHAT I WOULD DO... HOW THEY WOULD ALL FALL.

HOW *YOU* WOULD FALL.

SELVIG--TOMORROW YOU WILL GO TO YOUR SUPERIORS WITH A *PROPOSAL--*

YES, OF COURSE, MY LORD--

YOU WILL TELL THEM YOU HAVE A *NEW* IDEA FOR HOW TO USE KOBIK.

THE PLEASANT HILL INITIATIVE

PLEASANT HILL--A PRISON DISGUISED AS A SMALL TOWN, WHERE THE REALITIES OF SO-CALLED CRIMINALS WOULD BE REWRITTEN TO MAKE THEM COMPLICIT DRONES.

AN IDEA SO PERVERSE AND DEPRAVED--

--THEY COULD HARDLY SAY *YES* QUICKLY ENOUGH.

WHEN ZEMO AND HIS HENCHMEN ARRIVED, THEY WERE THE PERFECT TOOLS WITH WHICH TO BEGIN AN INSURRECTION.

ONCE YOU AND THE DIRECTOR ARRIVED, I KNEW HELMUT COULD NOT RESIST THE OPPORTUNITY TO STRIKE.

I WATCHED WITH GREAT AMUSEMENT AS HE TOPPLED YOUR AUTHORITY WITH VIOLENT GLEE.

AS THE INMATES RAN WILD AND DESTROYED ALL THAT HAD BEEN SO CAREFULLY "BUILT."

I SMILED AS ZEMO WAVED HIS SWORD WITH RIGHTEOUS FURY--ALWAYS SUCH A VINDICTIVE LITTLE MAN...

...AND THEN I PUT THE TRUE PLAN INTO MOTION.

I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND, FATHER-- WHY NOT SIMPLY TAKE THE CUBE, FORCE HER TO DO YOUR WILL? IN AN INSTANT YOU COULD RULE A UNIVERSE...

THAT POWER IS NOT YET ***OURS,*** SIN. IF WE PUSH THE GIRL TOO HARD, WE WILL ***LOSE*** EVERYTHING. NO, TO SEE VICTORY IN THIS CAUSE--

--WILL REQUIRE A MORE ***COMPASSIONATE*** TOUCH.

KOBIK WAS NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD MAKE THINGS APPEAR TO BE SOMETHING ELSE--

--AND SO I MADE MYSELF ONE OF THEM--ONE OF THESE PRISONERS--

--"FATHER PATRICK."

--GETTING HIM TO ALLOW YOU AND HILL TO SEEK MEDICAL CARE--AND RELEASE YOU INTO MY CUSTODY.

FATHER PATRICK? WOULD YOU DO THE HONORS? AFTER ALL, CARING FOR THE SICK, IT IS YOUR CALLING, NO?

WONDERFUL! WITH HIM BY YOUR SIDE, I HAVE NO DOUBT YOU WILL ARRIVE UNSCATHED.

HIS MIND WAS EVEN ***WEAKER*** THAN I EXPECTED.

ONCE I HAD ZEMO IN MY SIGHTS, IT WAS CHILD'S PLAY TO MANIPULATE HIS THOUGHTS--

I CAN'T BEGIN TO TELL YOU THE ***SATISFACTION*** OF WALKING YOU TO YOUR FATE, HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT.

I EVEN PROTECTED YOU WHEN WE WERE SET UPON BY ***ATTACKERS***--

--AND DISPATCHED THEM WITHOUT SO MUCH AS RAISING A HAND.

I TOOK YOU TO MEET MY LOYAL SERVANT, THE GOOD DOCTOR SELVIG--

--HE TOLD YOU WHERE YOU WOULD FIND KOBIK--

--AND THEN IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF ***LETTING*** YOU ESCAPE.

PLEASE...

IT'S ALL RIGHT, DOCTOR... ALL GOES ACCORDING TO PLAN.

BUT--I DON'T UNDERSTAND-- YOU LET HIM GO...

NO, I MERELY LED HIM TO HIS FATE. HE HAS FOUND THE CUBE--BUT HE HAS ALSO FOUND ***CROSSBONES.***

"EVEN NOW, ***BROCK RUMLOW*** BEATS HIM SAVAGELY. HE APPROACHES DEATH--

"THE GIRL WILL INTERVENE."

HOW CAN YOU BE SURE SHE WON'T JUST LET HIM ***DIE?***

PLEASE, DOCTOR. YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I DO--THAT IS NOT HER NATURE. BESIDES, SHE IS QUITE ***FOND*** OF ROGERS. SHE WILL DO WHAT SHE CAN DO TO HELP HIM.

EVERYTHING I HAVE TOLD HER HAS BEEN LEADING HER TO THIS.

"SHE WILL MAKE HIM ***STRONG*** AGAIN, ***YOUNG*** AGAIN. SHE WILL MAKE HIM THE MOST PERFECT VERSION OF ***HIMSELF.***"

BUT SHE HAS BEEN TAUGHT WELL TO BELIEVE TRUE PERFECTION COMES FROM ***ONE SOURCE.*** SO WHAT SHE MAKES HIM, SHE WILL CONSIDER THE ***GREATEST*** GIFT OF THEM ALL--

--SHE WILL MAKE HIM ***HYDRA.***

THIS IS HOW I FINALLY BEAT YOU, HERR ROGERS.

BY MAKING YOU THE BEST VERSION OF YOURSELF.

I ALWAYS TOLD YOU THAT YOU WOULD BE THE PINNACLE OF MAN, IF NOT FOR YOUR CORRUPTED SOUL.

IN THIS WAY, I HAVE REDEEMED YOU NOW.

I HAVE MADE YOU MY PERFECT WARRIOR--

--AND TOGETHER, WE WILL DO ***WONDROUS*** THINGS.

YOU WILL LEAD MY ARMY ONTO THE FIELD OF BATTLE--

--AND BY ***YOUR*** HAND I SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH.

AND WHEN YOUR FRIENDS LIE ***DEAD*** AROUND YOU--WHEN ALL YOU ONCE FOUGHT FOR IS TURNED TO A PILE OF ***ASH***--

THEN YOU WILL KNEEL BEFORE ME AND SPEAK THE WORDS...

"HAIL HYDRA."

NEXT